

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S VISIT STRENGTHENS OXFORD'S LINKS WITH EAST ASIA



Nurses at Youan Hospital, Beijing, which collaborates with Oxford's Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine on research into infectious diseases

Oxford is the best university in the world for medical sciences, according to the most recent world rankings of the *Times Higher Education* newspaper. The University has an extensive influence in the sphere of global health, with a network of international collaborative research centres, and much of that activity is focused on China. Vice-Chancellor Professor Andrew Hamilton's visit to East Asia in May was an opportunity both to build on existing links and to forge new ones. He attended a series of events and meetings in Beijing to celebrate the work of Oxford researchers who, together with Chinese universities, hospitals and government agencies, are looking at diabetes, cardiovascular disease, infectious diseases, depression, cancer and a range of other health issues.

Professor Hamilton met with the Chinese Minister of Health, Chen Zhu, together with Professor Peter Ratcliffe and Professor Xin Lu from the Nuffield Department of Medicine (NDM). They spoke not only of the successful partnership between Oxford and China in the medical sciences, but also about possible future collaborations. On the heels of these discussions, Oxford's Medical Sciences Division hopes to expand its partnership with the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences.

In Beijing, the Vice-Chancellor opened a new office to support Oxford's pioneering trials into diabetes in China. The office, known as the Oxford University (Beijing) Science and Technology Company Ltd (OUBST), is a wholly owned subsidiary company of the University. The centre started up in Beijing 2008, but its researchers have now been relocated to bigger premises in the centrally-located Kerry Business District. Professor Rury Holman from the Diabetes Trials Unit, based within the Nuffield Department of Medicine (NDM), is co-ordinating global trials to find better ways of reducing heart attacks and strokes in people with diabetes or pre-diabetes. The double-blind randomised ACE

intervention trial, designed by Professor Holman in collaboration with the People's Hospital, Peking University and the Chinese PLA General Hospital, involves up to 150 hospitals across the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong.

After the opening, academics gave presentations about their work to an audience comprised of their Chinese research partners and more than 100 alumni and friends. Professor Peter Ratcliffe, Head of the NDM, explained why China is a vital part of Oxford's research strategy. He said that China was the partner of choice because of the Chinese government's investment in biomedical science and technology, the size and relative genetic uniformity of its population and the opportunity for innovation in its fast-developing healthcare systems. Also speaking was Professor Emily Chan, Director of CERT-CUHK-Oxford University Centre for Disaster and Medical Humanitarian Response. In 2011 Oxford launched the collaborative centre at the Chinese University of Hong Kong with funding from CERT (HK) Ltd. The centre provides training for Chinese emergency personnel dealing with large-scale disasters.

The Vice-Chancellor also travelled to Hong Kong where one of the highlights was a storytelling event organised by Oxford University Press. Professor Hamilton read to a group of young children as part of the Oxford Path series. Oxford Path is a home-learning package aimed at teaching English to children up to six years old and forms part of OUP's range of educational titles created for people of all ages in Hong Kong.

Sleep was the topic of the latest in the series of Oxford Hong Kong Alumni lectures. Russell Foster, Professor of Circadian Neuroscience, told an audience of more than 100 alumni and friends that until recently we had little idea why we spend 30 per cent of our lives asleep. He warned that without proper sleep we increase the risk of reduced mental and physical reaction times, reduced motivation, memory loss, depression and metabolic problems, and could even carry a greater risk of cancer.

The Vice-Chancellor went to Japan for the final leg of his trip to East Asia. He visited the new University of Oxford office in the Uehiro Foundation building in Tokyo and hosted the first Oxford Academics in Japan Lecture. Professor Tony Hope enlightened everyone with his lecture on ethics in medicine. At a subsequent reception for alumni, more than 200 attended – one-fifth of the total number of alumni living in Japan.

The Vice-Chancellor went to Yokohama, south of Tokyo, to visit the base of the Japanese car giant Nissan. Nissan continues to support the work of the Nissan Institute of Japanese Studies, based in St Antony's College, and is also collaborating with Oxford's Mobile Robotics Group. This group, led by Professor Paul Newman, is developing a new generation of robotic vehicles that could make the roads safer.

Before leaving Tokyo, Professor Hamilton was honoured to meet Crown Prince Naruhito and his wife Crown Princess Masako – both Oxford alumni – as well as Prince Akishino. The University has enjoyed close links with the Japanese Imperial Family since the 1920s, when His Imperial Highness Prince Chichibu studied at Oxford.